

Montgomery County Council

I write to you concerning an area of the most serious concern, namely the potential introduction into our county of so-called “vaccine passports” or having to provide proof of vaccination in order to enter certain public establishments. I am wholly opposed to this suggestion and wish to make some points about the potential consideration of any scheme of this type.

Firstly, to make vaccination the basis of whether someone is allowed entry to a venue, or participation in an activity, makes no logical sense in terms of protecting others. If the vaccines are highly effective in preventing significant disease, as seems to be the evidence from trial results to date, then those who have been vaccinated have already received protection; there is no benefit to them or other people being vaccinated. Further, since vaccines do not prevent infection per se even a vaccinated person can carry and pass on the virus, so to decide someone’s “safe non-spreader” status on the basis of proof of their immunity to disease is spurious.

Secondly, requiring proof of vaccination to allow individuals access to certain establishments and being able to even maintain their current job position gives rise to serious risks of discrimination against individuals on the basis of disability, health and religious grounds. Being forced to show proof of vaccination would constitute an unethical form of coercion and violation of the principle of informed consent. People may have various reasons for being unable or unwilling to receive vaccines currently available including, for some Christians, serious issues of conscience related to the ethics of vaccine manufacture or testing. We risk creating a two-tier society, a medical apartheid in which an underclass of people who decline vaccination are excluded from significant areas of public life. There is also a legitimate fear that this scheme would be the thin end of the wedge leading to a permanent state of affairs in which COVID vaccine status could be expanded to encompass other forms of medical treatment and perhaps even other criteria beyond that. This scheme has the potential to bring about the end of liberal democracy as we know it and to create a surveillance state in which the government uses technology to control certain aspects of citizens’ lives. As such, this constitutes one of the most dangerous policy proposals ever to be made in the history of the United States of America.

Finally, to the extent that your Government decides to allow public or private sector actors to verify vaccination status based on the vaccine passport, there are significant privacy implications associated with allowing a yet to be-identified range of entities to collect personal health information. Although this risk is mitigated when the amount of information is constrained, it is not eliminated. A choice not to be vaccinated is already socially stigmatized today, so mandating its disclosure is a significant violation of one’s privacy. It means that even a small amount of information on the vaccination card, name and vaccination status, is sensitive. The Government may be inadvertently inviting public shaming and risk public confrontations at a time of high public anxiety. Further, it remains unclear who would be permitted to view or even potentially scan the card, under what circumstances, whether personal info would be recorded or records of scans would be kept, and how accommodations for the unvaccinated might be addressed. If the card is also to become digital at some point, additional technical privacy concerns arise.

This is a complete infringement on our constitutional rights and freedoms and should absolutely be voted against.

Jen Gray  
Montgomery County Resident